

ORIGIN/ACTION

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Guatemala-2

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AIRGRAM

A-170

NO.

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TO : Department of State

DEPT PASS: GUATEMALA (2)

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: Chart of Incidents, June 1969

REF

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/HR

REVIEWED BY ECH DATE 7 Oct 1969

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

1. The overall level of politically motivated violence ebbed slightly from the May high, but it still remained at the upper limit of the "normal range." The data show a statistically insignificant drop in Guatemala City, a sharp decline on the South Coast, and a constant and quite high rate in the North-east. The seriousness of the violence may have risen a bit, particularly in the Northeastern Region. "Hotspot" on the South Coast last month moved up from Escuintla to San Marcos where there were three killings which might have had political overtones.

2. The most spectacular FAR attack during the month took place June 1 with the assassination of Mario LOPEZ Villatoro and his bodyguard. One terrorist captured after the attack told police that he was in a FAR cell assigned to kill Lopez, a leading MLN political figure, whenever and wherever possible. It is possible that the FAR was responsible for the robbery of a small textile firm in Guatemala which netted \$1,500. The well organized four man team hit the plant just as the owner was making up his payroll. Then, on June 17, private and national police had a long, early morning gunfight with a band of youths caught in an attempt to steal a car in Zone 4. Four innocent bystanders were wounded in the shootout which netted two young, low-level FAR members and an innocent victim.

3. The eight bombings during the month caused no serious personal injury. Those almost certainly politically motivated include a hand grenade at the home of the DCG presidential candidate, two bombs at the Acci3n Conjunta offices in Jalapa, and one that damaged a vehicular bridge in Izabal.

4. In the Northeast Departments evidence of increasing Rightist activity is beginning to appear. Items: June 4, PR candidate for Mayor Chiquimula

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killed; June 5, PR leader in Santa Lucia, Zacapa, killed; June 17, railroad worker in Zacapa killed; and June 20, PR Secretary and son in Chiquimula assassinated.

5. Last month three fatal shootings in the Department of San Marcos received press notice. On June 2, unknown men savagely beat a finquero and then killed him. On June 6, snipers ambushed another finquero then reportedly fled across the border into Mexico. On June 22, four or five youths assassinated the comisionado militar in Tecun Uman. Four of the youths were said to be in police custody, but no official version of the motive has been published. Family and press speculated that it must have been done by guerrillas, making it the only activity in San Marcos to be publicly ascribed to subversives.

6. The June 16 designation of Col. Manuel Francisco SOSA Avila to be Minister of Government (Interior) replacing Hector MANSILLA Pinto should add a much needed vigor to that Ministry. (See A-162 for details on the Sosa appointment.)

The designation was made public shortly after MLN candidate Carlos ARANA Osorio held a closed-door session with President MENDEZ (behind a virtual human wall of bodyguards as well) which sparked unfounded local rumors that the two events were directly linked. (Sosa had already been recalled from his post as Military Attaché in Spain before the Arana-Mendez discussions.) Arana reassured President Mendez that both he and the MLN wanted the country to go to the polls and that he would side with Mendez in case of a coup attempt. Arana also urged the President to disband the PR's so-called Centurions, a group of toughs that the PR organized about the time of the Barbarena elections earlier in the year. Mendez reportedly told Arana that he had already ordered the dissolution of the band. (See A- 163)

7. On the legal front, the Third Court of Appeals twice took an unusually hard line against accused subversives. On June 17, it reversed the ruling of a Court of First Instance in the case of Oscar Moises ROLDAN Espinoza. Roldan received a six year, eight month sentence for crimes against democratic institutions. Then on June 23 the same Appeals Court instructed a Court of First Instance to re-try the case of Juventino CATALAN Bertran, accused of participating in the attack on the Cipresales barracks in March 1968. The move constitutes a virtual command to bring in a finding of guilty.

COMMENT: The assassination of Lopez could well have provoked the bloody reaction on the part of the extreme Right-wing that the FAR must have anticipated. Instead, due in large measure to the calming influence of Col. Arana, the extremists did little more than fume, at least in volatile Guatemala City. The Right's relative restraint prevented FAR from blaming future crimes on Rightist repression.

It would also appear that Arana's friendly talk with the President may have braked the emergence of outright violence between toughs from the two parties. This "era of good feeling" could easily be broken, however, by continued persecution in the Northeast.

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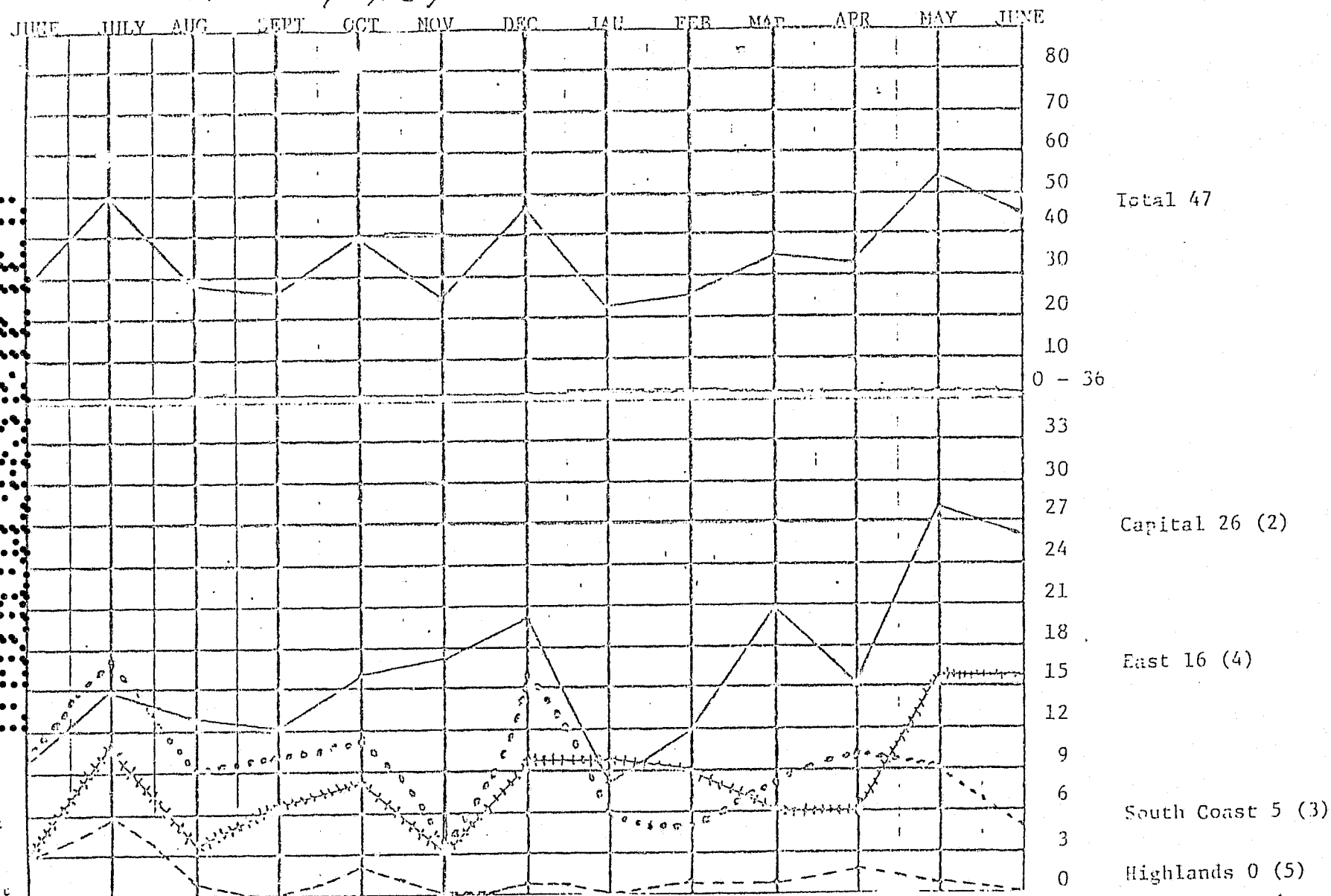
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(1)

MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST RELATED INCIDENTS BY REGION
 JUNE 1968 - JUNE 1969



- (1) For purposes of this graph both acts of violence includes shootings, bombings, etc., and assassinated bodies
 (2) Capital Area: Sacatepequez, Guatemala
 (3) South Coast: San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa
 (4) Eastern Region: Jutiapa, Jalapa, El Progreso, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal
 (5) Highlands: Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Solola

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